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ABSTRACT

This paper explores some of the evidence relating similarities between lower animal behavior in defense of territory and administrative behavior in defense of position prerogative. The bureaucratic organization has a system of sanctions to penalize those who would infringe upon the territory of superordinates. Humans mark their domains by audio and visual symbols much as many animals do. If we compare our behavior with the observed behavior of the baboon, the congruence could be shocking. Empirical data reported by Ardrey indicate that lower animals have better accomodated the differences between the sexes than have humans; men and women may love one another in the union of matrimony, but they do poorly in the union of professions. There is increasing evidence that fragmentation within the educational profession explains, in part at least, why education does not get a larger proportion of the gross national product. If we continue behaving like baboons and allow ourselves to be fragmented by our protection of territory, the educational enterprise will limp along without reaching its full potential. (Author/JG)

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ADMINISTRATION AND THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE

Robert P. Moser

The "territorial imperative" for many age-gapped people may call up thoughts of a Teddy Roosevelt tearing down illegal fences in North Dakota, or a ghetto tenement owner evicting a sobbing housewife, or a four year old claiming exclusive domain over the neighbor's sandbox. The TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE[1] for others may be the delightful, though sobering, book by Robert Ardrey. In 1966 he published this stimulating provocative book as a sequel to an earlier and equally challenging volume, AFRICAN GENESIS.[2] With his first volume, he stirred up an intellectual storm among routinized scholars. Five years later, he again shook the peaceful social approaches to the explanation of natural phenomena with his THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE. Biologist Ardrey reported in this second volume his carefully recorded observations of the territorial imperative in the animal kingdom. He contended that territorial behavior by man and animal is instinctive; that social behavior is as much a part of the evolutionary phenomenon as brain size or running legs or language.

No attempt is made here to record all of the possible manifestations that man, like his counterpart on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder, is a territorial animal; this essay does explore some of the evidence, from the phenomena observable by any discerning person in his daily life, in answer to the question, "Is the homo sapien as superior as he thinks?" The focus of these observations is upon human behavior in that segment of observable man's society engaged in administration in general, and in school administration in particular. This statement is meant to serve as a starting point for an exploration into the data available in abundance to any of us if we will only observe what we see relating similarities between lower animal behavior in defense of territory and administrative behavior in defense of position prerogative. Hopefully, the observations in comparison may provide a lesson for those who would assume differentiations between the human and so-called "wild" kingdoms. There are literally hundreds of behaviors to explore as similarities are tested. This is merely a start.

The Wildness of Bureaucracy

Is it not defensible to assert that bureaucratic organization does, in fact, nurture the territorial imperative? The bureaucratic organization has developed an easily identifiable system of sanctions; the negative ones are designed apparently at least to penalize those who would infringe upon the territory of superordinates. The positive sanctions are used to reward those who conscientiously guard and show deference to the territory of the board or the superintendent.

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[1]Ardrey, Robert, THE TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE, New York: Atheneum, 1966.

[2]Ardrey, Robert, AFRICAN GENESIS, New York: Atheneum, 1961.

EA 008 666

Each superordinate at each echelon of command has developed a system of sanctions which serves to reward or punish those subordinates whose behavior is supportive or threatening to the territory of the "leader."

Pick your favorite bureaucrat, become your own anthropological observer, and examine the modus operandi in terms of territories that are being protected! Or, if you want to be dangerously personal, examine honestly your own behavior. The revelations of this latter effort may send you forthwith to join the nearest dissenters march. You may even ask the band to strike up the marching tune, "Don't Fence Me In."

We may begin at the highest or lowest level of human effort. For example, in our own federal government, the system of checks and balances is a means devised by man to protect and defend well-defined territory. The President protects his prerogatives, but the Congress and the Courts likewise have territories to protect.

Who shall declare war? Who shall make and confirm appointments? Who shall lead the party? These are concerns even at such high levels. Historically, the War of Independence, the Civil War, World Wars I and II, States Rights, Desegregation, Off-shore Oil Rights, Cambodian Escalation, and Supreme Court Appointments--each is a manifestation of a basic struggle for preferred territory--the territorial imperative.

Any bureaucracy grapples with its high and low concerns. A high percentage of hierarchical problems, interpersonal relationship problems, role conflicts, and organizational malfunctions can be viewed with new insight if we perceive them as manifestations of the wildness of bureaucracy.

Territorial Symbols

What kind of symbols do we observe daily in the educational enterprise to indicate that the territorial imperative is operating? If we are in an elementary or secondary school, we will observe, for example, (1) the teacher who lays in a supply of construction paper to last a whole year to protect it from those marauders out there,--presumably other teachers; (2) the teacher who resists getting a teacher aide, ostensibly out of patriotic devotion to duty, but really to protect his own territory from invasion by another adult; or (3) the principal who will carry out his own curricular development program without help from those "central office know-it-alls," ostensibly to demonstrate his professional competence, but really to protect his bailiwick from invasion by someone who might undermine the security of his controlled territory.

We will observe in the machinations of the Board-superintendent dyad, for example, the board which becomes disenchanted with the superintendent when he becomes too strong, obstensibly because he no longer is attuned to the values of the Board members, but really because he is a threat to their perceived sovereignty. In the local arena, we note the board of education budget that is slashed by the fiscal body, ostensibly because the taxpayers can't stand any more, but really because the board has become too much of a threat to the territory of the "superior" fiscal body.

Higher education, the alleged seat of the most esoteric learning, and the bulwark of basic research, is not immune to displaying the special instinctive behavior of territorial protection. There is the familiar effort of department faculties jealously guarding their prerogatives against marauding deans and chancellors who would invade their "academically free" territories. Another example is found in the tenured professors who insist on scholarship, teaching, and service in carefully calculated amounts to protect the territory of the

academic world from those who would subvert or sabotage its scholarly atmosphere by too much effort on good teaching and dedicated institutional service.

Natural Versus Myopic Geography

Dogs, monkeys, polar bears, kobs, and elephants, for example, mark their territories by various ingenious devices, like urination, screeching sounds, or beating down the foliage. Humans mark their domains by audio and visual symbols, perhaps more sophisticated, but just as much in evidence. "Full Professor," "Dr.," "Director," "Coordinator," the "lunch clique," "carpeted offices," "private secretaries," "muted language," "parking rights," "letterheads," "disbursable complimentary tickets," to point out a few, are university staff manifestations of territorial markings. The animals have developed the system instinctively. Have the human symbols or markings utilized by man been developed instinctively, or has he really determined their use on the basis of some viable rationale?

Man Betrays His Affinity For Animal Territorial Charcteristics

If we were to step aside to watch ourselves go by, to watch our own calisthenics as we engage in making a living, striving for success, impressing our friends and adversaries--and if we were to compare our behavior with observed behavior of the baboon or the grizzly bear,--the congruence between the paired observations could be shocking.

Overt and Covert Politics

Educators in our society long have been plagued by the myth that politics and education do not mix. On the contrary, politics and education are mixing. Public education operates in an arena defined and imposed by the body politic; its territory is clearly designated by laws, by financial resources made available, by referenda passed or defeated, by various constraints, some of which are obvious and some of which are covert. These territorial markings are even more clear than the territorial markings of the apes or the elephants. Human, bureaucratic, governmental, and political territories are marked, not only by visual or olfactory symbols, but also by unusual labels, complimentary or degrading. The human animal excels the wild animal in the sophistication of the means and breadth of communication. The territorial struggle concerns the proportion of societal resources to be divided between the public and private sectors and the distribution of resources within the public and the private sectors.

Sanctions of Confrontation

Teachers in Wisconsin really had no operating territory which was exclusively their own until 1959, when that state passed the first state law permitting public employees to engage in collective bargaining. Until very recently school districts were territories controlled by boards of education, citizens, and superintendents; teachers were permitted access to the territory, but they were kept in egg crate compartments, and generally denied protective interaction with their peers or their environment. Admittedly, territory is not the only factor responsible for the advent of the new negotiation game which might be called the "territorial expansion" game. In the years since 1959, there is increasing evidence that teachers have, in fact, moved into once sacred territory.

For example, as recently as 1965 it would have been preposterous to contemplate teachers exerting some clout over decisions concerning the school calendar, or pupil teacher ratio, or job specifications for principals. The territorial imperative has existed and the evidence of its potency continues to mount.

Sexuality and Territoriality

This essay is not meant to be a discourse on the birds and the bees, or boy and girl relationships; but, nonetheless, the territorial imperative comes into play as one contemplates the battle of the sexes, at least among school positions. The empirical data reported by Ardrey would indicate that the so-called lower strata of the animal kingdom has done a more efficient job of accommodating the differences between the sexes than the purported occupants of the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. Men and women may love one another in the union of matrimony but they do poorly in the union of professions. Is this a myth or a reality? Human female/male behavior would at least support the hypothesis that it is a reality. Why are there so few women in professorial ranks in departments of educational administration? Why has the percentage of women elementary school principals gone down so dramatically in the last decade? Is there any viable rationale for so few female principals in elementary schools--a world dominated by women? Is it logical that leadership, research, and service are the exclusive domain of the positioned male? Isn't it time that the male half of the species, hypothetically the most rational and intelligent, face up to the reality of the territorial imperative and use its intelligence to create a climate in which both males and females can contribute their expertise to the total enterprise on the basis of competence rather than on the flimsy justification of sex-related attributes?

Recapitulation and A Final Word

There is increasing evidence that fragmentation within the educational establishment, within the educational associations, and even within the male/female divisions of the educational profession is, in part at least, an explanation of why the educational enterprise does not get a larger proportional share of the gross national product at the federal, state, or local level. It is suggested that those who are concerned genuinely with the future of the American ideal should use their intelligence and ability to think logically, to take a lesson from the animal concept of territorial imperative, and to proceed forthwith to deemphasize the debilitating aspects of protection of territory. Educators, singly and by organized groups, should play an aggressive part in restoring the authentic guidance system to perpetuation of the great American ideal. The most promising posture is to accentuate the positive concepts of: unity of purpose, contribution by competence, utilization of cumulative intelligence, and management by objective.

The decade of the 70's, in the development of administration as a field of study, will be identified historically as the decade of "accountability," "systems theory," "management by objective," "management of conflict," "a search for relevance," "behavioral dynamics," "unleashing potential," "the utilization of cumulative intelligence in organizational decision making," and "the search for improvement." In this new search for viable alternatives, as means to utilize in the management of the affairs of men, it just could be highly productive if the human animals, both in and out of administration, would engage in some insightful introspection, and taking their cues from the precise observations of

the biologists, look for answers to a very basic question, "Just what does make us so superior to the creatures in the wild kingdom?" If we were to be painfully honest with ourselves, an old cliche "hi tiger," passed off as a mere pleasantry, might take on distressingly accurate meaning.

It happens to be a deep-seated belief of the writer that, if we continue behaving like the baboon or the African kob and allow ourselves to be fragmented by our protection of territory, the educational enterprise will limp along without reaching its full potential. If, however, we can learn a lesson from the biologist and rise above the animal instinctive defense of territory--then, and only then, the educational enterprise can make its rightful contribution to the improvement and perpetuation of the American ideal. Then, and only then, will the educational enterprise at all levels have a rendezvous with greatness. The choice of territorial claim and related behaviors may offer a refreshing and surprising opportunity to sharpen the differentiation between the animal and the human world!

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